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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language focused their April 1 news coverage on the controversy over whether the Chen Shui-bian caretaker government should raise or freeze gasoline prices; on president-elect Ma Ying-jeou's planned meeting with President Chen Shui-bian Tuesday morning; on possible developments in the cross-Straits relations; and on the future direction of the defeated DPP. The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" ran an exclusive banner headline on page four that said "National Security Bureau: Chinese Communist Party Takes Precautions against [Possible] 'Taiwan Independence Incidents' before May 20."

12. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" said president-elect Ma and vice president-elect Vincent Siew will soon come to realize that it is never easy to be a leader. The article said forming a new cabinet and finding a way to deal with China are the two challenges Ma and Siew will face initially. A "China Times" column cautioned both sides of the Taiwan Strait on the possibility that U.S. President George W. Bush, in order to leave a legacy, may want to push Taiwan and China to talk, mediating a peace agreement before he steps down in another nine months. An op-ed in the pro-unification "United Daily News" suggested that Ma be more cautious when he makes remarks now, because Beijing will be watching closely and evaluate Ma's every word. End summary.

[Ed. Note: A searchable archive of past issues of AIT/Taipei's media review products may be found at [www.intelink.gov/communities/state/taiwanmediareview](http://www.intelink.gov/communities/state/taiwanmediareview).]

#### A) "The Difficulty of Being A Leader"

Columnist Antonio Chiang said in his column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (4/1):

"... Washington and Beijing both congratulated Ma Ying-jeou [on Ma's election]. However, it will be Ma's wishful thinking if he thinks most of the ideas he advocated, such as the peace accord, the 1992 consensus, and the three links [across the Taiwan Strait] can be achieved right away. A-Bian also tried to push these agendas when he assumed office initially, but to no avail. Everyone is curious what excellent plan Ma can offer [for the strained cross-Straits relations] other than showing a goodwill gesture toward Beijing.

"It is a dynamic game to deal with the Chinese Communists. [Ma] has to consolidate every step when [he] advances. Every move likely will increase or decrease his freedom to act. For the political negotiations initiated by Beijing, regardless of the agenda, Taiwan is essentially regarded [by Beijing] as both a rival and a target for negotiations. Once Taiwan accepts such an agenda, it will only win back itself should the island win, but it will lose everything if it loses. However, for Beijing, it will win anyway, as long as Taiwan is willing to talk. ..."

B) "[U.S. President George W.] Bush Seeking to Leave a Legacy; Both Sides Should Take Precautions"

Deputy Editor-in-Chief Kuo Chen-lung wrote in the "International Column" in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (4/1):

"... Ma Ying-jeou's visit to the United States is definitely not as simple as setting a precedent. What the United States really wants is to meet with the [Taiwan] president-elect and talk about cross-strait relations in a broad and practical manner; Washington not only wants to discuss the content of [Ma's] inaugural address but also to involve itself in the steps and timeline of the development of cross-strait relations, so that they can pose the question, 'Is there anything the United States can do [for Taiwan and China]?'"

"Judging from the situation that [U.S. President George W.] Bush has been running into a wall [in international issues involving the Middle East, North Korea and Africa], if a mechanism for cross-strait contact and interaction can be formed in the six months after Ma's election, it will be the biggest diplomatic achievement [for Bush] in his term of office. The resumption of talks by mid- or low-level officials [across the Taiwan Strait], such as Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation and China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait, is not a political reconciliation in the United States' view. The best option [for Washington] will be to arrange a summit, bringing Ma and Hu Jintao together to stand next to Bush. Even if [both sides] fail to achieve anything in the future, it will be an excellent photo opportunity. Isn't it so that the Camp David accords won the Nobel peace prize? Who cares if the mechanism will be able to last long?"

"Ma certainly does not want to be pushed; he has four, or even eight years to do so, and he can decide at his own pace. Hu has less than five years left [on the throne], and he is willing and he can wait."

But Bush has only nine months left in the remainder his term; he may overstep his authority and hasten to act as a mediator, because he is impatient. Hu can drag his feet, can take advantage of the aspect favorable for Beijing because of Washington's push for talks.

But for Ma, he can hardly say 'No' to Bush because the United States has a great influence on Taiwan. ... It will be a tragedy for both sides of the Taiwan Strait should it really happen some day that [KMT Legislator] Su Chi and [China's Deputy Foreign Minister] Dai Bingguo are forced to draft an agreement under the supervision of the United States' next secretary of state."

C) "The Election Is Over, Ma Should Be Careful of What He Says"

Barry Chen, a professor at the Graduate Institute of American Studies of Chinese Culture University and a visiting scholar at Beijing Union University, opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (4/1):

"... Now that Ma [Ying-jeou] is elected, Beijing has rose beyond [the stage of] viewing Ma's words as simply campaign rhetoric and is seriously waiting for Ma to explain clearly his cross-strait policy."

Beijing is at least highly concerned about how Ma will handle the three cornerstones, on which the 1992 consensus was built. The first [cornerstone] is the one China as stated in the Constitution of the Republic of China, which Beijing regards as the basis for [the statement that] 'both sides across the Taiwan Strait belong to one China.' As a result, [China] advocates that the Taiwan issue should be decided jointly by all the Chinese people, including the Taiwan people. But Ma asserts that the future of Taiwan has to be determined by Taiwan's 23 million people."

"Second, although Chen Shui-bian has terminated [Taiwan's] National Unification Council, which was established in accordance with the National Unification Guidelines, Beijing and Washington both believe that the National Unification Council still exists while its operation is just frozen. Beijing is waiting to see how Ma will manage the issue of the National Unification Council. Third, most Taiwan people used to consider themselves as both Taiwan people and Chinese people. Today, most people consider themselves only Taiwan people but not Chinese. Beijing is also concerned about how Ma will respond to this phenomenon. ...."

